

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Withdrawn) A nonwoven fabric comprising:

fibers bonding to each other; and

a hygroscopic agent adhering to part of said fibers.

2. (Withdrawn) A nonwoven fabric according to claim 1, wherein said hygroscopic agent comprises a substance having a high moisture-retaining performance and porous particles of silicon dioxide adhering to the periphery of said substance.

3. (Withdrawn) A nonwoven fabric according to claim 1, including a first layer made of fibers to which said hygroscopic agent adheres and a second layer made of fibers to which no hygroscopic agent adheres.

4. (Withdrawn) A hygroscopic member comprising:

a nonwoven fabric including a fiber layer made of fibers bonding to each other and a hygroscopic agent adhering to one surface of said fiber layer; and

an air-permeable sheet covering the entirety of said nonwoven fabric.

5. (Withdrawn) A hygroscopic member according to claim 4, wherein said hygroscopic agent comprises a substance having a high moisture-retaining performance and porous particles adhering to the periphery of said substance.

6. (Currently amended) A method for producing a nonwoven fabric by bonding fibers to each other, comprising the steps of:

supplying raw material of said fibers to a first centrifugal separator;

ejecting fibers from said first centrifugal separator by a centrifugal force;

and

supplying a hygroscopic agent onto said fibers ejected from said first centrifugal separator so that said hygroscopic agent adheres to at least part of said fibers, wherein the hygroscopic agent comprises particles of silicon dioxide.

7. (Original) A method for producing a nonwoven fabric according to claim 6, wherein a second centrifugal separator is disposed on a lateral side of said first centrifugal separator and wherein a belt mechanism including a belt driven to circulate is disposed below said first and second centrifugal separators, said method further comprising the steps of:

forming, on said belt, a first layer of said fibers ejected from said first centrifugal separator, said hygroscopic agent adhering to at least part of said fibers; and

ejecting fibers from said second centrifugal separator by a centrifugal force to form a second layer made only of the fibers on said first layer.

8. (Original) A method for producing a nonwoven fabric by bonding fibers to each other, comprising the steps of:

- (a) supplying raw material of fibers to a centrifugal separator;
- (b) ejecting fibers from said centrifugal separator by a centrifugal force and forming a fiber layer by bonding said ejected fibers to each other; and
- (c) adhering a hygroscopic agent to said fiber layer, wherein the hygroscopic agent comprises particles of silicon dioxide.

9. (Original) A method for producing a nonwoven fabric according to claim 8, wherein said step (c) includes the steps of:

- heating said fiber layer; and
- supplying said hygroscopic agent onto said heated fiber layer.

10. (Original) A method for producing a nonwoven fabric according to claim 8, further comprising a step of:

- (d) covering the entirety of said fiber layer to which said hygroscopic agent adheres with an air-permeable sheet.

11. (Original) A method for producing a nonwoven fabric according to claim 10, wherein said step (d) includes the steps of:

- supplying said air-permeable sheet above and below said fiber layer to which said hygroscopic agent adheres; and

cutting said fiber layer to which said hygroscopic agent adheres to a desired number of pieces having a desired size and simultaneously therewith, covering each of said pieces with said air-permeable sheet.

12. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for producing a nonwoven fabric by bonding fibers to each other, comprising:

a raw material supplying means for supplying raw material of said fibers;

a first centrifugal separator receiving said raw material from said raw material supplying means and ejecting said fibers by a centrifugal force;

a hygroscopic agent supplying means in said first centrifugal separator for supplying a hygroscopic agent onto said ejected fibers; and

a belt mechanism driven to circulate below said first centrifugal separator.

13. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for producing a nonwoven fabric according to claim 12, further comprising a second centrifugal separator capable of ejecting fibers by a centrifugal force, said second centrifugal separator being disposed on the lateral side of said first centrifugal separator and above said belt mechanism.

14. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for producing a nonwoven fabric by bonding fibers to each other, comprising:

a raw material supplying means for supplying raw material of fibers;

a centrifugal separator receiving said raw material from said raw material supplying means and ejecting said fibers by a centrifugal force;

a belt mechanism driven to circulate below said first centrifugal separator;

a heating means disposed downstream from said centrifugal separator for heating a fiber layer formed on said belt; and

a hygroscopic agent supplying means disposed downstream from said heating means for supplying a hygroscopic agent onto said fiber layer heated by said heating means.

15. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for producing a nonwoven fabric according to claim 14, further comprising:

a sheet supplying means for supplying an air-permeable sheet above and below said fiber layer to which said hygroscopic agent adheres; and

a thermo-compressive bonding and cutting means for cutting said fiber layer to which said hygroscopic agent adheres to a desired number of pieces having a desired size and simultaneously therewith, capable of covering each of said pieces with said air-permeable sheet.

16. (Withdrawn) An organic electroluminescence display comprising:

a substrate;

a plurality of organic compound layers formed on said substrate; and

a hygroscopic member for absorbing and retaining moisture, said hygroscopic member including a nonwoven fabric made of fibers bonding to each other and a hygroscopic agent adhering to part of said fibers.

17. (Withdrawn) An organic electroluminescence display according to claim 16, wherein said nonwoven fabric includes a fiber layer made of said fibers bonding to each other and a hygroscopic agent adhering to one surface of said fiber layer, and wherein the entirety of said nonwoven fabric is covered with an air-permeable sheet.